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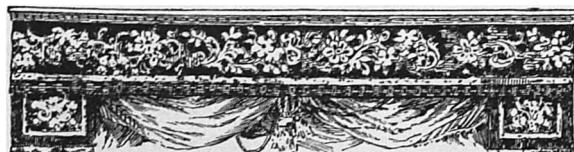
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DECORATIVE ART IN LONDON.

BY HENRY B. WHATLEY.

I FEAR that I have nothing very remarkable this month to tell of our esthetic doings in England, and I must ask my readers to bear with me while I unfold a somewhat uneventful tale. When we study the very varied forms which ornamentation has taken at different periods, and the luxuriant amount of it which we now see on all sides of us, it is not easy to hit upon some definition that will include the good and exclude the bad.

Mr. H. H. Statham, in a lecture the other day at the London Institution, said that "ornament might be defined as design added to any object in order to increase the beauty of that object, and this definition would exclude from consideration all artistic designs which were sufficiently attractive to be regarded as separate pieces of decoration." One great difficulty is that much old ornament which we cannot but admire is opposed to correct artistic principles, and, therefore, although it gives us pleasure from the beauty of workmanship, we are forced to condemn it for purposes of reproduction.

A system of movable wall decorations invented by an ingenious artist some years ago, has been lately re-invented and described. The wall of the room was colored with a warm gray, and on this was fixed with drawing pins papier maché molds of various forms and designs in rich colors. These were movable, washable, and effective, and persons of taste and resource might carry out the idea in a variety of ways with the satisfaction that on going to a new house they will be able to take their decorations with them.

Lord Leconfield has just had the morning room in his London mansion decorated in a very beautiful manner. Mr. W. E. F. Britten has produced a charming frieze of boys and dolphins at play, which is painted in oil. This harmonizes with the general design of the room which is the work of Mr. George Aitchison, A.R.A. The walls are covered with a floral design in delicate rose color, and the bookcases and richly carved over-mantel are of ebonized walnut and rosewood with inlaid foliage of engraved ivory.

Plaster has obtained so bad a name that one is apt to forget the exquisite work that has been executed in that material. Some of the ceilings in old English houses and in Italian palaces are triumphs of artistic treatment, and one can only hope that at no very distant time ceilings may be designed for our modern buildings which may be worthy to be put by the side of the work of the older artists. In January Mr. Aston Webb read a valuable paper before the Architectural Association on plasterwork, in which he treated his subject with much fullness. Although the author condemned, in the strongest terms, the general but abominable use of plaster as a mere imitator of stone, he had much to say of its merits when treated artistically. Much beautiful work has been brought to light by the removal of plaster laid on by unappreciative restorers of a former age, but there is another side to the picture. Mr. Webb writes: "The modern Goth, with his hatred for shams, despised with a burning contempt all traces of such a mean material, and it is now generally admitted that many walls were stripped by the restorers' zeal, and the joints coarsely pointed where the stone walls were never meant to be laid bare, and a plain plaster face had been intended by the original designers."

Some magnificent glasswork intended for the palace of an Indian prince has been produced by Messrs. Osler, and it has lately been on view in their fine show rooms. It is a crystal throne, and consists of a large chair with a high back. From the arms rise pillars of glass to support a cupola-shaped canopy on the plan of half an octagon which is surmounted by a large star that radiates in all directions by means of the electric light. Two electric lights are placed within the dome, and the wires are carried up within the glass pillars. The back and seat is cushioned with red velvet, and a foot stool of the same material set in glass accompanies the throne. The pineapple-shaped knobs that finish the arms are like enormous diamonds, being cut into 324 facets, and the whole object is a remarkable example of an elaborate system of glass cutting.

We hear so much of what can be done with

paper that we are scarcely surprised when we are told of the roofs of houses being made from this material with success. Now we learn of a substance called Zylonite, which can be made to imitate horn, india rubber, tortoise shell, amber, and glass. The basis of Zylonite is a plain white tissue paper made from cotton or cotton and linen rags. The paper is first treated in a bath of sulphuric and other acids, and then the acid is washed out, the paper being treated with a preparation of alcohol and camphor. It will be a curious development when houses are built of paper, roofed with paper, and glazed with paper. The question will then arise whether there is enough paper remaining to print books upon.

Of more theoretical matters, mention may be made of Professor Boyd Dawkins' address on Hand and Head in art work. He pointed out that we should never get on satisfactorily until we gave up the ridiculous prejudice that it is a more estimable thing for a man to work with his head than with his hand, and he asked the pertinent question "what was to be the end of all this higher education?" If it were to produce more professional men—more doctors, more lawyers, more clergymen, more professors, and more clerks, he thought the less they had to do with it the better. He considered the highest form of education was that which would enable all classes equally to do their work better in the position in which they found themselves.

Mr. William Morris continues his socialistic propaganda, and Professor Huxley and Professor Roscoe have been talking about technical education.

The public discussion on sanitary matters still continues to be general, and as the International Health Exhibition will be one of the chief features of the coming session, there seems to be every reason for expecting the subject to continue to attract popular attention. The various committees who have the arrangement of the different departments of the coming exhibition have been working very busily, and most of them have drawn up memoranda for the guidance of exhibitors. Some of the points brought out are of general interest, as when the Food Committee tells us that an endeavor will be made to illustrate every class of foreign cookery, not only of the luxurious sort, but of that practised in the houses of the well-to-do, of the middle class, and of the poorer classes in foreign countries; and when the Dress Committee suggests that dresses and costumes shown should be displayed upon lay figures, and that the exhibition of ancient costumes should be encouraged in preference to modern reproductions of the same. Touching this question of costume, the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colors are organizing an original pageant to be exhibited at the Prince's Hall on the first of May next. It is proposed to form a procession of the great artists of past times from those of Apelles downwards. Every care will be taken to obtain strict historical accuracy, and each member will represent some favorite master of a former age.

To return to the Health Exhibition. The memorandum on India is specially valuable, and if the proposals are carried out, the portion devoted to that country is likely to attract a large number of visitors. The object is to illustrate, in as vivid a manner as possible, the actual life of the masses of the people, as regards the three especial objects of the exhibition, their food, their dress, and their dwellings. With respect to the last of these, it is suggested that there might be exact models of the better class of homes in representative districts (say of a cultivator of the better class, a banker, a shop-keeper), of the cottages of the lower classes, the huts of weavers, fishermen, etc., of European up-country bungalows, and of a bit of a bazaar in an up-country town. It is also proposed that with these models should be shown small figures dressed to represent the people at their usual avocations, with models of their furniture and of their domestic animals. An attempt will be made to bring over Indian workmen such as potters, blacksmiths, weavers, cloth workers, embroiderers, silversmiths, etc., to illustrate the daily life of the people of India.

Naturally, to us Londoners, the consideration of the various questions of health in their bearing upon our own city are of the most interest. Sir Joseph Bazalgette, the newly-elected president of the Institution of Civil Engineers, has been dealing with the question of the growth of London in his inaugural address which bristles with facts. He compares London with Paris and New York in respect to population and house accommodation. London proper contains about four millions of people, and covers an area of 117 square miles, upon which were built 500,000 houses, giving an average of eight persons to each home, and nearly seven houses and 53 persons to each acre. Paris

contains a population of 2,240,000, occupying 77,000 houses, and covering an area of 30 square miles, which gives an average of 29 persons per home and 4 houses and 116 persons per acre. New York contains a population of 1,350,000, occupying 100,000 houses, and averaging 13.5 persons per house.

Mr. William Westgarth, a London merchant, is so thoroughly dissatisfied with the condition of the streets, that he proposes that Central London should be rearranged and rebuilt. He has placed at the disposal of the Society of Arts a sum of £1,200 to be awarded in prizes for essays on the subject. The first prize will be a sum of £250 for the best practical essay upon the re-housing of the poor, the second prize is £500 for the best practical essay upon the whole subject of the sanitation, street re-alignment, and reconstruction of the central part of London. In addition there will be three further prizes of £150 each for the best treatment—1, of the engineering considerations; 2, of the architectural consideration; 3, of the sanitary consideration. Such liberal offers as these ought to result in some valuable suggestions on a very important subject.

Demolitions are constantly taking place, and it is a pity that some better system should not govern the re-erections. Goldsmith's chambers in Garden Court Temple are about to be pulled down, as were a short time ago those in Brick Court which he subsequently inhabited. Much of interest is thus cleared away, but the loss of many houses of a poor character is not likely to be regretted, particularly when they are replaced by handsome buildings. A case in point is the Prince's Hotel which makes an imposing appearance in Coventry Street, between Leicester Square and Piccadilly. Adjoining the hotel is the Prince's Theatre which appears to be fitted up with all the improvements which are supposed to make a building of this character safe and pleasant to sit in. One of the chief of their features is the hydraulic fire-proof curtain separating the stage from the auditorium, which measures 32 feet 6 inches by 26 feet 6 inches, and is constructed of two screens of wrought iron plates $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick, forming a double division with an air chamber between of 6 inches. With an expenditure of only 84 gallons of water, the curtain, weighing about 7½ tons, can be raised or lowered in 50 seconds. The house is lighted with Swan's incandescence lamps, and gas fittings are also fixed as a precaution in case of failure of the electric light at any time.

ONE of the prettiest, most inviting homes in the neighborhood of New York is that of Charles A. Dana, the editor of the *Sun*. He lives on West Island, a small place of about fifty acres, located on the Sound, some three miles above Glen Cove.

The island has been made charming in every respect; an avenue of the most magnificent elms leads from the bridge of stone thrown across the little stream that separates it from the mainland; there are lawns and flower beds, ponds of very limited extent but considerable artistic pretensions, summer houses and romantic retreats of all sorts. The dwelling is built upon a slight rise in the centre of the island, which, through courtesy, has been called a hill, and with the exception of an artistic little cottage known as the billiard room, is the only building upon the property. The residence is called "Dosoris," a word that would puzzle any savant until he learned it was a corruption of "Dos Uxor," the wife's dower. The interior furnishings show a refined and cultivated taste; the parlors are large and airy, and the sleeping rooms veritable pictures of comfort and quietude. Mr. Dana is a connoisseur in art matters, and his rooms show the tendency of his taste. Pottery has always been, more or less, a kind of hobby with him, and he has gradually gathered a collection that is truly valuable.

As to chairs for the parlor, a couple of good, well-stuffed easy chairs covered with the same tapestry as are the walls, and arranged so as to look toward the fire, ought to be sufficient for luxury—while six or eight little ebonized and cane-bottomed gossip chairs are the simplest and prettiest "occasional" furniture one can have. The gossip chair has a curved back which exactly fits the natural curve of the body, and the seat slopes gently downward and backward so as to give the best possible support with the least angularity or awkwardness. With these pretty little clean cane seats, a black wicker-work chair, two easy chairs and a sofa, you should have enough places for family and guests in a quiet household.

WHITE ink for colored paper is made from one part muriatic acid and twenty parts starch-water. Use a steel pen.